

Practical and Difficult Conversations: A Supervisor's Lens on Coaching Interventions in Preschool and Early Education

Ali Freedman, PsyD, MBA
ECMH Conference Co-Chair

Moderator: Lexie Palacio, MA
Tech Host: Maureen Helinski

Context

- Focus not on clinical diagnosis or intervention of preschool child, rather on the process of helping coordinate the team to row in the same direction
- Focus on the *soft* skills...which are HARD!
- The lens is from supporting a supervisee. Helps supervisees do this and help them help others do it.
- Parallel processes throughout – Supervision or interactions with teachers and assistants, administrators and staff, parents and caregivers, additional support professionals, and the child and peers
- Everybody's a client

Common challenges in preschool intervention

- Lack of shared view
 - Lack of awareness/understanding
 - Denial
 - Cultural differences
- Blame and Judgment
 - Whose fault is it?
 - Whose responsibility is it?
 - Will I be judged?
 - Who are you to judge me?

Common challenges in preschool intervention

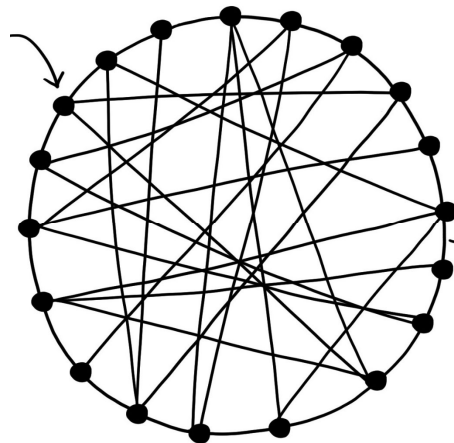
- Engagement
 - Time
 - Desire
 - feeling overwhelmed
 - linguistic/cultural complexity
 - insufficient rapport
 - negative relationship/interactions
 - negative expectations

Common challenges in preschool intervention

- Implementation
 - Coordination
 - Prioritizing
 - Support
 - Barriers
 - Doing
 - Tracking
 - Reviewing
 - Revising or Releveling

Potential players

- Child
- Peers
- Parent(s) and/or other caregivers
- Teachers and assistants
- Administrators
- Staff
- Pediatrician or other doctors
- Speech, OT, Behavior Specialist, or other Allied Health Professionals



Feeling Judged

- When you feel judged, how do you feel...
- Most of us don't feel
 - Safe
 - Creative
 - Supported
 - Eager to try new things
 - Welcoming of collaboration with the person judging you

Game Plan

Stretch:
Foundational and
Course Correction

Practice:
Teaming up

Game time:
Moving Forward
Together



Stretch: Foundational and Course Correction

- Empathy
- Most generous assumption
- Blind spots and biases



Empathy

- “Empathy is infinite and renewable.
The more you give, the more you have.”
~Brene Brown
- Let’s talk about empathy



Empathy Road Map



- Curiosity
- Inquiry
- Listen! – “Seek to understand, not to be understood” ~S. Covey
- Hold space and withhold judgment
- Connect with the feeling AND the person

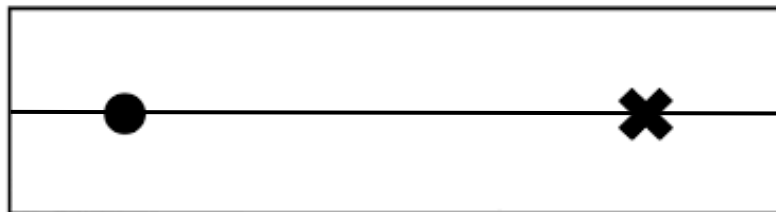
Most Generous Assumption

- “All I know is that my life is better when I assume people are doing their best. It keeps me out of judgment and lets me focus on what is, and not what should or could be.” ~Mr. Brene Brown, aka Steve Alley
- Go To Generous Assumption - Assume everyone wants the best for the child
- Coaching to MGA.... That could be. I wonder what else it could be.
- Let’s try it out

Blind Spots and Biases

- Blind spots are natural
- We all have them

Blind spots and Biases



Blind Spots and Biases

- So true it's worth repeating - we all have them
- Being willing to look for them
- Automatic "System 1 Thinking" and shortcuts get us through a lot (Daniel Kahneman). We need to know when to slow down and engage in System 2 Thinking (deliberate, analytical, rational).

How might you help others see become aware of blind spots?

What have you done to bring awareness to your blind spots and biases?

Do you have an ah ha moment discovering a blind spot or bias?

Let the light shine in

- Name it and invite corrections or questions
- Individualize - Use inquiry AND listen! (Including about culture, hopes, concerns...)
- LOOK for signs (understood/misunderstood, approach/pull back)
- "Tell me where I'm wrong..."
- "Tell me more..." in response to criticism or negative feedback
- Supervision, reflective supervision, consultation
- Reflect on feedback, even feedback given in jest
- Reflect on recurrent issues
- Assume it is there so look for it. Identifying bias allows you to act differently
- Seek out interactions with diverse people, experiences, communities
- [Mindfulness](#)

Practice as a team: Skills to Succeed

- Relationships
- Trust
- Communication
- *Putting the time and effort in here pays dividends*



Relationship

Request partnership

Show that you value other perspectives

Inquiry

Respect other's roles and efforts – what has been tried?

Build on collective desire for best outcome for the child

Find out how it is best to interact with each person

Trust

- Transparency
- Authenticity
- Honesty
- Takes time to develop...and very little time to tear down
- Follow through
- Demonstrate vulnerability and hold space for the vulnerability of others. "I'm not here to be right, I'm here to get it right."
- Acknowledge you don't know everything

Communication

- Language
- Modality
- Take the time to communicate to as many parties as needed
- Plan to make the most out of communication (time, setting)
- Stay curious, asking open-ended discovery questions
- "Seek first to understand , then to be understood" S. Covey
- Check in – Am I getting this right?
- Invite feedback – Tell me where I'm wrong...
- Ask permission

Game Time!

- Wraparound Principles
- Collaborative Problem Solving
- MI Informed Planning



Wraparound Principles

- Guide your approach
- Can be used as organizing checklist
- Adherence helps ensure collaboration
- Shared language and expectations



Collaborative Problem Solving (Greene & Ablon)

- Model for kids with challenging behaviors that can be used in team where you work together to solve problems in mutually satisfying way
- Underpinning Philosophy – Kids do well if they can. If a child is not doing well, the child may have a skill to learn.
 - 1 – Identify and understand the child’s concern about the problem and reassure that it won’t be solved through exertion of will
 - 2 – Identify and share adult’s concern about the same issue
 - 3 – Brainstorm solutions together and agree on one to try

Motivational Interviewing Change Plan Model

(Miller & Rollnick)

- What is the goal or change to be made (e.g., begin, increase, improve...)
- Name the reason(s) to make the change (which motivations are most prominent? Likely consequences of action and inaction?)
- How will we attempt to achieve the goal (Specific steps. When, where, how.)
- Who can help and how (What’s the plan to elicit support?)
- Challenges that might arise (Anticipate challenges)
- If the plan isn’t working, we can... (How can we stay on track?)
- How will we see the plan is working (What benefits are expected?)

Resources

- Zero to Three – Mindfulness Practices for Families
<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3406-mindfulness-practices-for-families>
- National Wraparound Institute – Wraparound Principles
[https://www.nwi.pdx.edu/NWI-book/Chapters/Bruns-2.1-\(10-principles-of-wrap\).pdf](https://www.nwi.pdx.edu/NWI-book/Chapters/Bruns-2.1-(10-principles-of-wrap).pdf)
- Collaborative Problem Solving – [1 page summary](#), Victoria Davis, 2015
 - Think:Kids and CPS Training <https://thinkkids.org/cps-overview>
 - In the workplace, Ablon & Bernstein
<https://www.mediate.com/pdf/CPSInTheWorkplace.pdf>
- Motivational Interviewing Change Plan – Worksheet and Outline
<http://www.motivationalinterviewing.org/sites/default/files/changeplan.pdf>

- Karasik, L., Tamis-LeMonda, C., Adolph, K., & Bornstein, M. (2015). Places and Postures: A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Sitting in 5-Month-Olds *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 46 (8), 1023-1038 DOI: [10.1177/0022022115593803](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022115593803)
- Lueke, A., & Gibson, B. (2016). Brief mindfulness meditation reduces discrimination. *Psychology of Consciousness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3(1), 34–44. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cns0000081>
- Lueke, A. K., & Gibson, B. (2015). Mindfulness meditation reduces implicit age and race bias: The role of reduced automaticity of responding. *Social Psychological & Personality Science*, 6, 284 –291.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1948550614559651>